

For immediate release
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Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Ranginui, stands in strong support of the rights of whānau to engage in peaceful protest and hīkoi (marches) that give voice to our people's concerns and aspirations. This response comes in light of recent comments made by David Seymour, cautioning parents to justify their children's "unjustified absences" if they participate in such hīkoi.

"The right to stand together, speak our truth, and assert our mana is a vital aspect of our tikanga and our obligations as kaitiaki (guardians) of our people and whenua," said Suaree Borell, Deputy Chair of Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Ranginui. "Participating in hīkoi is not simply an act of protest; it is a sacred expression of our unity, our heritage, and our responsibility to uphold justice and advocate for our rangatahi (youth) and future generations."

Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Ranginui firmly believes that hīkoi provide an educational and empowering experience for tamariki (children), embedding in them a deep understanding of their whakapapa, rights, and responsibilities as Māori. Hīkoi offer real-life lessons in civic engagement, collective action, and the pursuit of justice, concepts that extend far beyond the confines of the classroom.

"As a people, we have long understood that our most profound teachings often happen outside four walls," said Borell. "We see the hīkoi as a pathway for our tamariki to learn who they are, where they come from, and the power they hold to create positive change. These are not 'unjustified absences'; they are acts of whakapapa in motion."

The Uenukurangi Symposium, currently running at Mercury Baypark Arena in Mt Maunganui, further underscores the significance of platforms where whānau, hapū, and iwi can gather, share whakaaro (thoughts), and collectively shape our future. Such gatherings, alongside peaceful hīkoi, represent our enduring commitment to kotahitanga (unity) and self-determination.

Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Ranginui calls upon all decision-makers, including Mr. Seymour, to understand and respect the importance of these expressions of mana motuhake (self-determination) and to refrain from undermining whānau-led efforts to stand for what is right and just.

In this pivotal moment, we stand with whānau who choose to participate in hīkoi as a demonstration of commitment to their people, whenua, and future generations. We affirm that our whānau have every right to teach their tamariki through real-world acts of resilience, unity, and advocacy.

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